

Clean Water and Natural Lands Commission
Honolulu Hale, Room 202
530 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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2016 MAY 31 AM 8:26

P11, Bill 15

RE: Letter of Support for Kānewai Spring, FY2017 Clean Water and Natural Lands Application

Aloha mai kakou Chair Pang and Members of the Clean Water and Natural Lands Commission,

Kumuola Education Center is writing in strong support of the Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center and The Trust for Public Land's effort to purchase and protect Kānewai Spring in Kuli'ou'ou.

The Kumuola Education Center is a vibrant learning environment that is centered around Waiāhole, Kapalaho, and Kionakapahu fishponds in the 'ilikūpono of Honohononui, Hilo. Steered by genuine community partnerships, Kumuola seeks to nourish community stewardship and well-being. Traditionally, these ponds were a place that nourished the people of Keaukaha and their visitors. Kumuola seeks to restore that function by respecting the needs of the community, crafting programs to meet those needs, and educating participants along the way.

I visited Kānewai Spring in May of 2015 for the first time. A pristine natural spring that is flourishing amidst the development of Maunalua is an amazing opportunity that we have to support. The environmental significance and value of a Kānewai spring to the surrounding fishpond and reef is immeasurable. Unpolluted freshwater inputs to fishponds and reefs are critical to the ecological health of these areas. The spring hosts a population 'o'opu 'akupa (*Eleotris sandwicensis*), which is one of only five native freshwater fish in Hawaii as well as an endemic species to Hawaii. This fish was a significant food source for native Hawaiians and is being found less and less in Oahu as stream habitat has been altered or tapped for human water use.

We have seen Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center's passion for restoring Kānewai to an environment that can embody "clean water and natural lands". Kānewai fishpond has a significant population of invasive tilapia, which the Center has been using for education as they attempt to control the population. Tilapia have been shown to have a highly damaging effect on populations of our native stream organisms.

Maunalua Fishpond Heritage Center will work to ensure the biological integrity of this area. They will increase education and outreach efforts about the importance of clean water for our natural systems and food sustainability. Furthermore we envision the continuation of on-going partnerships focused on environmental, conservation and cultural education. Please support this effort to protect Kānewai as a treasure for our state and our people.

Mahalo,

Blake McNaughton
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MISC. COM. 1618

Council